

REVIEWED

By City Clerk's Office at 12:21 pm, Jun 01, 2021

Planning Commission Applicant

Elisa Paster

Application Date: 05/29/21

Reside in Santa Monica: yes

If yes, number of years: 14

Hold an elected position: no

If yes, please specify:

INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:

I am currently serving on the Planning Commission. I was appointed to the position in 2019.

Community activities:

Secretary and board member of Menorah Housing (non-profit providing housing for very low income seniors)

Past president and board member of the Westside Urban Forum

Active member of the California Division of the American Planning Association, the Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing and the Urban Land Institute

Graduate of the first Women in Leadership class of Coro of Southern California

Qualifications, experience, education, and technical or professional requirements:

Education

- JD from the University of New Mexico (2003)
- MSc from the University College of London, Bartlett School of Architecture in Housing in Development (Housing Policy) (1995)
- BA from Bryn Mawr in the Growth and Structure of Cities (City Planning) (1994)

Professional Experience

- Land use attorney in Los Angeles, California representing private clients (2005-present)
 - Glaser Weil (2013 to present)
 - Gilchrist & Rutter (2011-2013)

- Paul Hastings (2005-2011)

Additional information included below.

Areas of demonstrated expertise:

I am qualified for a position on the City's planning commissions based on my experience over the last two years as Planning Commissioner, my five year career a City Planner, my long interest in planning, urbanism, affordable housing, my volunteer roles, and my 18 years of experience as a land use attorney.

I studied planning and housing in undergraduate and graduate school (see above). My graduate degree was focused on international housing public policy. I worked in planning for approximately five years in Albuquerque, New Mexico (my hometown), in the Community Services Department and in the Planning Department. At the Planning Department, I staffed the Planning Commission. I then went on to study law with the intent of working as a land use attorney, and I have been practicing in that area since 2003. For several years, I worked for a firm doing municipal side work, in particular drafting zoning codes and General Plan updates, growth management ordinances, impact fees, and handling municipal litigation. I moved to Los Angeles in 2005 (to Santa Monica in 2007) and have largely represented private and non-profit clients since that time.

In my Menorah Board member role and as a land use attorney representing affordable housing developers (outside of Santa Monica), I regularly deal with building code and planning and zoning issues related to housing, including ADA and fire life safety issues. Typically, I advise on these issues as they relate to land use entitlements and processing of approved entitlements for building permits. For example, on a project I've worked on for Decro Corporation, we recently addressed an ADA issue for our sidewalks in front of the project. I advise my clients regularly on planning and zoning issues related to affordable housing entitlement, including compliance and exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

One focus in my practice is affordable housing. I work with non-profit and for-profit affordable housing developers across California. Some of the affordable housing projects I've recently worked on (or am working on) include: a 142 unit project in Santa Rosa, a 127 unit project in Glendale, and development of housing for veterans at the West Los Angeles VA. In addition to my expertise in land use entitlements and CEQA, work for these organizations and for Menorah has allowed me to have working knowledge of tax credits (4% and 9%), HUD 202 financing, No Place Like Home (County funding) and vouchers (Section 8 and VASH).

I also advise Menorah and clients on state law related to affordable housing and tenant rights. As such, I am familiar with the Ellis Act, Costa Hawkins, the Civil Code, and affordable housing exemptions in CEQA and the Government Code. To this end, I've also volunteered at housing clinics sponsored by legal non-profit organizations advising walk-in clients. I organized a housing clinic in the City of Santa Monica in

cooperation with Bet Tzedek and the City Attorney's Office. I'm also very familiar with the import and duties imposed on local governments with respect to Housing Elements and Regional Housing Needs Allocation.

I've followed the changes in planning and zoning in Santa Monica as a resident over the years, including the update to the LUCE, the Downtown Specific Plan, and the zoning code update etc. Thus, I have a good understanding of how the land use and zoning process interacts with the City's Charter amendment and associated rent stabilization program. I've participated in the Housing Production Subcommittee for the Housing Element, and have taken an active role on the Commission in our discussions of the proposed Housing Element.

I also have extensive experience in entitling and defending commercial and mixed use developments, including density bonus and transit oriented communities projects. I'm experienced in understanding and advising on the local, state and federal law, compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and consensus and community issues.

The extension of the Expo Line to Santa Monica has presented huge opportunities and challenges for our community. It is imperative that we provide a range of transportation options for residents and workers. This means that we must intensify development along transit lines to ensure their success. With infrastructure improvements, come pressures to the housing and real estate. We must adopt fair policies that protect tenants and increase the amount of housing for affordable households and middle income households. It isn't just a matter of building housing for low-income units; we must also protect and encourage housing at every level. Middle market and workforce housing must be a focus of our planning efforts. We need housing for people who work in our community in order to help reduce traffic and environmental impacts.

Goals:

1. To get more involved in the community and advise on policy related to housing and reasonable tenant protections, along with long term policy planning to house the residents and workers of our community, provide common sense zoning regulations, and to support projects that encourage good urbanism and livability in Santa Monica.

2. To provide expertise in planning, housing, and tenants issues to help inform public policy. My extensive experience working as a city planner "behind the counter," as a project manager for a non-profit assisting disadvantaged youth, and as a land use attorney - for municipalities, non-profits, and private property owners and developers - has given me a wide view of planning and public policy. Planning and housing decisions are very personal to many people, and it's important to balance both the human side of these decisions along with the needs of the larger community and public policy goals. I will bring my experience in the different facets of the planning and development process to help benefit our community.

3. To learn more about the challenges facing residents of our community related to housing and planning and how we can solve those challenges.

4. To work with the community, including the diversity of stakeholders, to formulate and recommend to the City Council a legally compliant Housing Element and on that furthers fair housing goals.

Vision:

My vision for the Planning Commission is to provide clear guidance and recommendations to the City Council and the community as to how our community should grow. We are in a severe housing crisis and we should be provide a clear path for housing to be built in transit centers and corridors to house the workers and residents of Santa Monica. If we do not make common sense planning decisions that allow for more housing, then the state will override local decision making. That is antithetical to the doctrine of local police powers and local decision making. So, our Planning Commission should work to achieve state goals of transit oriented development and housing for all, within the context of our community.

Personal Qualities:

I am the co-chair of the Government and Regulatory Group at my law firm, and I regularly work in a team in my law practice and oversee the two associates in our group. Part of my job is balancing the needs of the four partners on our team with the ability of associates to take on and complete work.

I was the President of the Westside Urban Forum for more than 2 years. Our board contained members with a diversity of views and I often helped our Board reach a consensus.

Negotiation and mediation is also a regular part of my job. I often help clients to understand how to get a project done based on the competing needs of the client, the community and the City. While I am advocating zealously for my clients, I am able to see that compromises must sometimes be made, and I am able to effectively communicate that to the client.

See above section regarding experience.

Will you be able to commit the necessary time to perform your duties if appointed to the board?

yes

How did you learn about the vacancy in this board or commission? (select all that apply)

Other

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Occupation: Attorney

Business name: Glaser Weil

Business address: 10250 Constellation Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90067

Business phone: 310 553 3000